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2002HANOI00579 - CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION EAP-00

INFO LOG-00 NP-00 ACQ-00 CIAE-00 DS-00 FBIE-00 VC-00
TEDE-00 INR-00 VCE-00 NSAE-00 SS-00 DSCC-00 DRL-02
NFAT-00 SAS-00 /002W

-----74445A 140555Z /38

FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5775
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 000579

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/BCLTV AND DRL/RF
DEPARTMENT PASS TO USCIRF

SECDEF FOR ABLAGG

E.O. 12958: DECL 03/14/2012
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [VM](#) [RELFREE](#) [HUMANR](#)
SUBJECT: HOW NOT TO MAKE FRIENDS

REF: A. HANOI 432 B. HANOI 443

1C. VIENTIANE 235

11. (U) CLASSIFIED BY RAYMOND F. BURGHARDT,
AMBASSADOR; REASON 1.5(D)
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12. (C) SUMMARY: GVN ACTIONS HINDERED CONTACT
BETWEEN RELIGIOUS LEADERS IT DID NOT HAND PICK AND THE
U.S. COMMISSION FOR INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM'S
(USCIRF) DELEGATION. CIRCUMSTANCES, INCLUDING A
PACKED ITINERARY, SELECTIVE COMPLIANCE WITH SCHEDULE
CHANGE REQUESTS, PLAINCLOTHES TAILS, AND POORLY
EXPLAINED DETOURS, COMBINED TO MAKE UNOFFICIAL
MEETINGS DIFFICULT. THE GVN'S ESSENTIALLY UNDISGUISED
EFFORTS TO CONTROL THE DELEGATION LEFT A WORSE
IMPRESSION OF VIETNAM THAN THE CONTENTS OF THE
MEETINGS THE GVN SEEMS TO HAVE FEARED SO MUCH. END
SUMMARY.

PLAYING GAMES WITH THE SCHEDULE

13. (C) DESPITE USCIRF REQUESTS IN WRITING, SENT
BEFORE THE DELEGATION LEFT THE UNITED STATES, THEIR
VIETNAMESE HOSTS, THE VIETNAM - USA SOCIETY, AN OFFICE
OF THE VIETNAM UNION OF FRIENDSHIP ORGANIZATIONS
(VUFO), REFUSED TO ELIMINATE ANY OF THE 26 ENGAGEMENTS
IT SCHEDULED OVER FIVE DAYS. VUFO ALSO REBUFFED A
SERIES OF ORAL REQUESTS TO STREAMLINE THE SCHEDULE
MADE BY THE DELEGATION, POLOFF, AND (SEPTEL) CONGEN
POLOFF. ON FEBRUARY 22, TRAN VAN DANG, GENERAL
SECRETARY OF THE VIETNAM FATHERLAND FRONT, VUFO'S

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PARENT ORGANIZATION, "CONGRATULATED" THE DELEGATION ON
ITS "ABUNDANT" SCHEDULE, BUT SAID THAT IT WOULD BE TOO
COMPLICATED TO CHANGE. LATER, IN AN ASIDE TO POLOFF,
THE DELEGATION'S HOST, HOANG CONG THUY, GENERAL
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SECRETARY OF THE VIETNAM - USA SOCIETY, SAID THAT HIS

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BOSS HAD TOLD HIM THERE COULD BE NO CHANGES. VUFO DID
COMPLY WITH AN EARLY REQUEST THAT THE DELEGATION TRIED
TO REVERSE AFTER IT REALIZED THAT THE CHANGE MEANT AT
LEAST TWO HOURS OF EXTRA TRAVEL TIME. VUFO REFUSED TO
REVERSE THE CHANGE, DESPITE CONGENOFF'S OFFER TO MAKE
THE NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS. CONFRONTED WITH THIS
INTRACTABLE SCHEDULE, THE DELEGATION DECIDED IT WOULD
HAVE TO SPLIT UP TO MEET INDIVIDUALS OUTSIDE ITS
OFFICIAL SCHEDULE AT THE SAME TIME AS OFFICIAL
MEETINGS. THEY ALSO DECIDED TO SIMPLY REFUSE TO
ATTEND EVENTS THEY HAD ASKED VUFO TO CANCEL.

MOTORBIKE TAILS

14. (C) THE DELEGATION HAD TWO UNOFFICIAL MEETINGS (SEPTTEL/REF D) IN HANOI, BUT PLAINCLOTHESMEN ON MOTORBIKES FOLLOWED THE DELEGATION'S EMBASSY VEHICLE TO BOTH. THE FIRST MEETING, ON FEBRUARY 21, WAS AT ONE PILLAR PAGODA NEAR HO CHI MINH'S MAUSOLEUM. TWO PLAINCLOTHESMEN DISMOUNTED FROM THEIR MOTORBIKES AND FOLLOWED THE DELEGATION AND ACCOMPANYING EMBOFFS ONTO THE PAGODA'S GROUNDS ON FOOT. THE DELEGATION SPOKE WITH A MONK IN ONE OF THE PAGODA'S PUBLIC ROOMS FOR ABOUT AN HOUR. EACH PLAINCLOTHESMEN CAME IN ONCE FOR A FEW MINUTES AT A TIME, OSTENSIBLY TO PRAY AND MAKE AN OFFERING WHILE STANDING CLOSE ENOUGH TO EAVESDROP EASILY. THE MONK, RECOUNTING PROBLEMS WITH THE DISTRICT GOVERNMENT (SEPTTEL/REF D), SEEMED TO PAY LITTLE ATTENTION TO THE LISTENERS.

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ANOTHER TAIL AND THE PHONE CALL THAT SAID IT ALL

15. (C) ON FEBRUARY 22, USCIRF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN MCFARLAND, ANALYST JOHN TAI, AND EMBOFFS PAID A CALL ON PASTOR VINH OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF VIETNAM (ECVN). PLAINCLOTHESMEN IN TOW, THE DELEGATION AND EMBOFFS DROPPED BY PASTOR VINH'S CHURCH ON FEBRUARY 20 TO TRY TO MEET WITH HIM. PASTOR VINH ASKED THAT THEY SEND A WRITTEN REQUEST FOR A MEETING. THE DELEGATION COMPLIED AND HE CALLED TO ACCEPT THAT AFTERNOON. AFTER THE DELEGATION AND EMBOFFS RETURNED TO THE CHURCH ON FEBRUARY 22, PASTOR VINH SAID THAT THE POLICE HAD CONTACTED HIM IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE DELEGATION LEFT ON FEBRUARY 20 AND ASKED HIM WHAT HE HAD DISCUSSED WITH THE DELEGATION. HE SAID THAT HE HAD NOT SAID ANYTHING TO THE DELEGATION, BUT TOLD THE POLICE THAT HE INTENDED TO MEET WITH THE DELEGATION BEFORE SUNDAY. A MAN AND A WOMAN ON A MOTORBIKE FOLLOWED THE DELEGATION FROM THEIR HOTEL TO THE ECVN

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ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	DS-00	FBIE-00	VC-00
	TEDE-00	INR-00	VCE-00	NSAE-00	SS-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02
	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/002W				

-----744461 140555Z /38

P 140529Z MAR 02
FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5776
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 HANOI 000579

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CHURCH ON FEBRUARY 22 AND APPARENTLY WAITED OUTSIDE THE CHURCH GATE DURING THE MEETING. ABOUT THIRTY MINUTES INTO THE MEETING MR. THUY OF THE VIETNAM - USA SOCIETY CALLED POLOFF'S CELL PHONE. AFTER ASKING AMONG OTHER THINGS, POLOFF'S LOCATION, THUY, SOUNDING

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SOMEWHAT STRAINED, SAID, "MEETINGS OUTSIDE THE OFFICIAL SCHEDULE ARE NOT HIGHLY APPRECIATED," AND HUNG UP.

THE HOST AS PEST

16. (C) THUY SUBSEQUENTLY ASKED POLOFF ON TWO OR THREE OCCASIONS IF THERE WERE GOING TO BE "OTHER" OUTSIDE MEETINGS, ONCE WINKING AT POLOFF. ON FEBRUARY 23, WHILE THE DELEGATION WAS IN HUE, THUY AGAIN CALLED POLOFF TO ASK FOR CONGEN POLOFF'S PHONE NUMBER (EVEN THOUGH HE ALMOST CERTAINLY HAD IT). AT ABOUT THAT TIME, CONGEN POLOFF AND PART OF THE DELEGATION WERE AWOL FROM AN OFFICIAL DINNER (SEPTTEL).

WE WANT TO KEEP AN EYE ON YOU; WILL YOU PAY FOR IT?

17. (C) THUY AND POLOFF HAD SEVERAL CONVERSATIONS ABOUT WHETHER THE DELEGATION WOULD USE A GVN PROVIDED VEHICLE OR EMBASSY AND CONGEN VEHICLES, PARTICULARLY FOR A TRIP FROM HO CHI MINH CITY TO AN GIANG PROVINCE. THUY PERSISTENTLY PUSHED FOR VUFO TO PROVIDE ALL THE VEHICLES NEEDED TO ACCOMMODATE THE DELEGATION, EMBASSY TRANSLATOR, CONGEN STAFF, AND VUFO'S TWO HANDLERS. HE EXPRESSED NO INTEREST IN CONGEN'S OFFER TO PROVIDE TWO VEHICLES, EVEN THOUGH HE AND HIS VUFO SUPERIORS REPEATEDLY ASKED, FIRST THE DELEGATION, THEN THE EMBASSY, IF THEY WOULD PAY VUFO'S TRAVEL EXPENSES FOR THE TRIP.

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THE FIASCO MOVES SOUTH

17. (C) SEPTEL DETAILS THE GVN'S MISHANDLING OF THE USCIRF DELEGATION IN HUE, AN GIANG, AND HO CHI MINH CITY. POLICE CONFINED AT LEAST TWO INDIVIDUALS TO THEIR HOMES TEMPORARILY. TWO OTHERS REPORTEDLY LOST PHONE SERVICE AFTER AGREEING TO MEET USCIRF. WITH THE DELEGATION IN A CONGEN VEHICLE AND VUFO IN ANOTHER, VARIOUS EXASPERATING CIRCUMSTANCES PROLONGED THE TRIP TO AND FROM AN GIANG. POLICE GATHERED CONSPICUOUSLY OUTSIDE PLACES WHERE THE DELEGATION HAD OR MIGHT HAVE HAD UNOFFICIAL MEETINGS, INCLUDING THE CONSUL GENERAL'S RESIDENCE. FINALLY, VUFO'S THUY BECAME INCREASINGLY UNPLEASANT AS THE VISIT WORE ON.

18. (U) THE USCIRF DELEGATION WAS UNABLE TO REVIEW THIS CABLE BEFORE THEY DEPARTED VIETNAM.
BURGHARDT

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